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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Second and third periodic reports of States parties

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC*

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of the Dominican Republic, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.37; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.106 and CEDAW/C/SR.111, and Official Records of the General Assembly, forty-third session, Supplement No. 38 (A/43/38), paras. 127-181.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In February 1988, the Dominican Republic, a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, submitted to CEDAW its initial report on the steps taken by the Dominican Republic to fulfil the provisions of the Convention.

2. We are now submitting to CEDAW the second periodic report on the application of the Convention, covering the years 1988 and 1989.

3. This document is divided into two parts. The first describes the general social, economic, etc. situation in the country and the implementation of the Convention against that background. The second part deals with specific articles. This arrangement follows the guidelines supplied by CEDAW for the preparation of second-cycle periodic reports.

4. The format adopted for the second part has been to combine those articles that relate to individual topics. Thus, articles 2, 3, 9 and 15 are dealt with jointly under the heading "Legislative questions", articles 5 and 16 under "Cultural and family questions", and articles 7 and 8 under "Questions relating to participation in politics".

5. This approach has enabled us to deal with and analyse articles that are related in subject-matter in a more effective way.

6. The present report has been drawn up in collaboration with the Expert Team at our Department for the Advancement of Women.

7. The task of gathering information was obstructed by a number of factors, such as the lack of recent statistics kept separately for men and women and of information and follow-up studies at the offices of government departments; this applies to the subject-matter of all the articles (education, rural women, health, etc.).

8. Mention should, however, be made of the important contribution made to the preparation of the report not only by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) but also by the coordinating bodies for non-governmental women's organizations and by certain eminent women in the country, who because of their working experience in the field of women's issues have been able to make a significant contribution to this document. Our thanks to them all.

EXPERT TEAM

PART I

(1) THE GENERAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND LEGAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY

9. The Dominican Republic is governed by a political system of representative democracy. It shares with Haiti the island of La Hispaniola, the second largest of the Caribbean Islands, situated between Cuba and Puerto Rico. It occupies the eastern part of the island, covering an area of 48,422.23 km^2, with a population density of approximately 144 inhabitants per km^2.

10. Over the last 20 years, it has been one of the most economically active of the Caribbean countries in the areas of tourism and export processing, owing to the powerful incentives offered by Laws Nos. 153 and 299. In the 1970s there were about six export processing zones, yet by the early 1990s more than 25 industrial estates had been set up, with the creation of some 200,000 jobs.

11. This growth has also been boosted by a continuing, intensive rural-urban migratory process, shifting labour to the towns. In 1950 the urban population accounted for 24 per cent of the total, and by 1981 some 52 per cent of the country's inhabitants were living in urban areas. Over the last 65 years, the population of the city of Santo Domingo has increased 60-fold, while the population of the country as a whole has risen by 6.7 per cent only.

12. The bulk of the migrant population is female: 54.4 per cent in Santo Domingo and 57.1 per cent in Santiago, the country's two largest urban centres. In 1981, the sex ratio was 110.6 females to 100 males, and 66 per cent of the economically active female population lived in urban areas.

13. Internal migration - coupled with the economic crisis that has beset the country, particularly since the early 1980s, as a result of trade imbalances, the rise in oil and natural gas prices and other factors relating to international commerce - is leading to a major expansion of the informal sector of the Dominican economy, in line with the general pattern of Latin American societies.

14. Against this general background, women are joining the labour market, essentially in the export processing zones and the service sector. Around 40 per cent of these women are heads of household or are members of families with no adult males.

15. Privatization of Dominican society is a further trend that has been in evidence since the start of the last decade, most noticeably in the areas of health and education. In both sectors, the growth of private facilities is closely linked to the deficiencies of the public services.

16. As regards the legal sphere, the Dominican Government has constantly striven to uphold the major international instruments and conventions on women's rights that preceded the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. These include the Charter of the United Nations, 1945; the Charter of the Organization of American States, 1948; the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women, 1953; and the International Convenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1977.

There followed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 1979. All these agreements are being invoked as a means of enhancing the socio-economic and legal status of women in all our countries.

(2) LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION IN THE COUNTRY

17. The years 1988-1990 were a period of great activity for public and private women's organizations in their struggle to secure the necessary support - from the political, legal and other institutions of the country - to ensure that the issue of women's status would be taken up and discussed, as a social problem, on a permanent basis.

18. The establishment in April 1989, at the instigation of the Department for the Advancement of Women, of a national coordinating unit for non-governmental women's organizations represents a genuine effort at institutional coordination and provides a mechanism for joint promotion of the changes that need to be brought about in the status of women.

19. Steps have accordingly been taken to develop and increase public understanding and awareness of the disadvantaged situation of women, through studies, publications, seminars, workshops and training and sensitization events, with a view to analysing and examining - from a gender perspective - the various factors that determine their situation and their rights of participation, and to formulating alternative proposals for their participation on an equal basis. Non-governmental women's organizations in the country have made a significant contribution in this respect, being at the forefront of research, alternative reporting and awareness-heightening in such areas as women's unequal social and sexual status; legal, technical and financial assistance; and the development of women's groups, chiefly in rural areas.

20. Nevertheless, serious obstacles continue to restrict the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 1985. Of the main obstacles, the following may be cited:

- Unawareness, both at the institutional level and among the population in general and women in particular, of the Convention's provisions and of the mandatory requirement that Governments which have ratified the Convention must implement those provisions;

- Lack of motivation on the part of male legislators to submit and/or consider proposals and measures for the benefit of women;

- Insufficient interlinkage between the two chambers of the Dominican Congress: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The administrative procedure requires that draft laws must first be considered by the Deputies and then be referred to the Senate; up to the present time, extensive delays have occurred in the passage of relevant bills from Chamber to Senate;

- The existence - despite efforts to amend it - of legislation that discriminates against women, resulting in unequal treatment as regards

their access to land ownership, their opportunities for training and vocational education, their working conditions and employment opportunities, and their family development prospects;

- Restrictions on the availability of gender-specific statistical information concerning the principal demographic, economic and social variables that would enable an objective assessment to be made of the extent of the social inequalities suffered by women in Dominican society;

- Concentration of decision-making authority in the hands of men, in both the public and the private sphere, notwithstanding the capability, efficiency and responsibility shown by women in the performance of skilled tasks and supervisory functions. This power structure existing in the civil service and private enterprise is also present in the political parties, regardless of their ideology;

- Perpetuation of an educational system that maintains sexist attitudes and stereotypes, which are reflected in gender-segregated education and instruction. The Ministry of Education has for the last 10 years been implementing a project with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aimed at modifying the teaching guidelines and curricula in order to alter the gender-segregation approach pursued in the educational system;

- Lack of permanent posts for active female members of the political parties;

- Allocation of limited financial resources from the national budget for the planning and execution of projects of special interest to women;

- Women's continuing exclusive responsibility for domestic tasks and child care, which limits their development as human beings.

(3) INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION IN THE COUNTRY

21. The implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires an appropriate institutional framework in the political, legal and administrative spheres if the major undertaking involved in bringing about the changes needed to rectify the disadvantaged situation of women in the various facets of social development is to be successful.

22. By its very nature, the issue of women cannot be approached or tackled in isolation; on the contrary, it calls for joint action on the part of the State and of the relevant public and private organizations. The formulation and execution of a national policy for the integration of women into development can thus become an effective mechanism for the implementation of measures for the advancement of women.

23. The application of the Convention and the execution of a national policy designed to improve the situation of women call for a political commitment

which will ensure that urgent priority is given to the problems of women in relation to the social objectives of development and in the allocation of budget resources.

24. In general, and in the specific case of the Dominican Republic, a lack of clear objectives, institutional weakness in decision-making, ill-defined procedures and duties of personnel serving in the various areas of work, and a high turnover of specialist staff owing to frequent political changes, are permanent features of most of our public institutions. There is no civil service or administrative career structure to ensure a more efficient, effective and stable workforce or to promote staff policies aimed at encouraging professionalism and institution building.

25. The Department for the Advancement of Women and its advisory board, which are the most appropriate bodies for promoting the implementation of the Convention and the execution of a national policy for the advancement of women, both suffer from the same weaknesses and shortcomings in terms of management, limited resources, lack of follow-up mechanisms and procedures, and other defects prevalent in all other institutions.

26. Planning, programming, budgeting and information systems are areas that have undergone differing degrees of development in all sectors of the country. Also, the lack of intersectoral, extrasectoral and institutional coordination is reaching detrimental levels, causing efforts to be dissipated on numerous programmes and projects operating independently and in isolation. Furthermore, a lack of sectoral leadership by those institutions that have legal powers to assume such a role - notably government departments and ministries - is reflected in non-enforcement of regulations and laxness in the discharge of responsibilities.

(4) MEASURES ADOPTED TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND TO GUARANTEE THEIR EXERCISE AND ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

27. The entry into force of the provisions of the Convention in the Dominican Republic in 1982 coincided with the establishment of the Department for the Advancement of Women as the supreme organ of the Dominican State responsible for coordinating, programming and executing policies in favour of women.

28. Since its establishment, the Department for the Advancement of Women has organized various information and awareness-heightening events concerning women's issues, which have contributed greatly towards publicizing the situation of Dominican women and to the formulation of useful proposals to improve their status.

29. Significant progress has been achieved by the Department for the Advancement of Women under an institution-building project implemented with the technical and financial support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has in fact enabled the institutional system to assume its role in Dominican society.

30. Between 1988 and 1990 (the period to which this second report relates), further public mobilization took place and other events (seminars, workshops, etc.) were held; specialist personnel of the public institutions continued to

receive gender-sensitivity training, and a regular, systematic process of coordination was established with local governmental and non-governmental institutions.

31. Through this process it has been possible to set up a coordinating unit for non-governmental women's organizations to provide inter-NGO coordination and a linkage with the State through the Department for the Advancement of Women.

32. Government coordination with the NGOs has got off to a good start and now needs to be further strengthened. Such liaison will make it possible to expand the coverage and scope of the programmes undertaken by the NGOs and will enable the findings of studies carried out on the status of women in the country to be taken into account in government planning.

33. The development and encouragement of social mobilization and civic participation are important means for advancing the status of women. According to an inventory of public and private women's organizations in the country, drawn up by the Department for the Advancement of Women, in 1988 there were some 67 non-governmental organizations working with women, albeit with different approaches and different population groups. During the period covered by this report, two new women's associations were granted legal status. All these women's groups and organizations are contributing to the rationalization of work, to the development of research and training, and to the dissemination and publicizing of information on women's rights.

PART II

INFORMATION RELATING TO THE ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION

(1) LEGISLATIVE QUESTIONS (ARTICLES 2, 3, 9 AND 15)

34. During the period 1988-1990, no major amendments were made to Dominican legislation to remove those provisions and articles that discriminate against women in the Civil, Penal, Labour and Commercial Codes - instruments which, together with the Constitution, regulate all facets of public and private life.

35. In the country's initial report submitted to CEDAW, considerable prominence was given to the work accomplished by a group of eminent Dominican women, by the Department for the Advancement of Women and its advisory board and by organized civic groups in the formulation of a preliminary bill to amend the existing legislation. The proposed amendments essentially relate to civil law, commercial law, criminal law, employment law and land law.

36. However, despite all the efforts expended by various sectors of Dominican society in both the governmental and non-governmental spheres, no amendments to establish equal rights for women were made to the current laws during the period 1988-1990, owing to the indifference of the Legislature.

37. Of the main activities that have been undertaken to further the public awareness-heightening and mobilization process in the hope that the existing laws and proposed amendments will soon receive due consideration by the

Legislative Chambers, mention should be made of the Seminar on the Socio-economic and Legal Status of Dominican Women, which was organized by the Department for the Advancement of Women and attended by non-governmental organizations and the eight female legislators serving in the National Congress.

38. Some of the main objectives of the seminar were to make specialist staff of competent government institutions aware of the discriminatory treatment of Dominican women and to assist in improving their legal status through a plan of action involving the Department for the Advancement of Women, the female legislators, the trade unions and non-governmental women's organizations.

39. As part of the recommendations stemming from this seminar, it was agreed to hold a workshop on the theme of "women and legislation" in the National Congress. This workshop was proposed by the women legislators with the essential aim of enhancing awareness among male legislators and involving them in an examination of the legal status of women and a study of existing draft legislation designed to rectify the situation.

40. Throughout 1988 the Department for the Advancement of Women worked closely with the women legislators in coordinating and programming the workshop; yet, once again, it was demonstrated that women's issues do not have priority on the male legislators' agenda and the workshop could not take place.

41. Other recommendations emanating from the seminar restated the amendments already envisaged in the preliminary bill to amend the relevant law. The most important changes are set out below.

The recommendations were aimed at:

- Eliminating inheritance differences between legitimate children (born in wedlock) and children born of consensual unions;

- Making abortion no longer a criminal offence in specific cases such as pregnancy resulting from rape or therapeutic abortion;

- Declassifying rape as an offence against decency and reclassifying it as an offence against physical and moral integrity, and modifying the penalties applicable according to the age of the victim;

- Making it no longer possible, with regard to rape of a minor, for the offender to use the act of marrying the victim as a means of demolishing the crime;

- Making spousal assault a punishable offence;

- Removing adultery as acceptable grounds for homicide;

- Regulating the conditions of employment of female domestic workers in private homes;

- Amending the land-tenure and inheritance provisions of the Agrarian Code that affect women.

42. A further important public awareness and mobilization event organized by the Department for the Advancement of Women was held in 1989. Its purpose was to examine the participation of Dominican women in elections.

43. This seminar was attended by leaders of the major parties and representatives of the different ideological and political trends. From it there emerged a set of demands deemed fundamental if there is to be any improvement in the social status of Dominican women.

44. These demands encompass such points as amendments to the existing legislation; improved conditions of employment; establishment of day-care facilities, public laundries, etc.; recognition of women's land rights; legislation on violence against women; more generous allocation of resources from the national budget for the execution of programmes and projects aimed at women; introduction of a proportional quota system to guarantee women access to elective and civil-service posts; introduction of party membership registration by sex in the country's various political parties; review of the educational system in order to eliminate sexual stereotyping, followed ultimately by the formulation of a national policy to promote an active and continuing role for women in social development.

45. In arranging the above-mentioned events, the Department for the Advancement of Women received technical and financial support from UNICEF, an organization that has also been funding an institution-building project for that Department since 1987.

46. In addition to these activities at the national level, the women legislators, in view of their minimal representation, have adopted a number of strategies to make their presence felt in Congress. Among other things they succeeded in bringing before the Legislative Chambers certain specific draft laws that would have at least some effect on the overall legal status of women.

47. The legislative bills submitted in 1988 and 1989 were concerned with:

- Women's right to hold title to land plots in homestead settlements (bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies but not yet considered by the Senate);

- Provision of day-care facilities in the most densely populated areas, primarily at business premises and industrial plants, in particular in the export processing zones;

- A provision whereby married women engaged in divorce proceedings could elect a place of residence other than the matrimonial home without any loss of rights (bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies and now awaiting consideration by the Senate);

- The right of a mother to apply for custodianship of an under-age child accused of a major breach of the law (bill currently before the review board).

48. The activities that were pursued in the country in 1989 to promote legal equality for women included the campaigns entitled "Y el derecho se hace mujer", launched by the Women's Legal Services Centre (CENSEL), and

"Tu mujer", also organized by CENSEL together with the Research Centre for Women's Action (CIPAF), the United Mothers' Centre of Haina, and other grass-roots groups and centres.

The aims of the campaigns were as follows:

(1) Encouragement of the organization, coordination and mobilization of the burgeoning popular movement for legal reform and social change;

(2) Familiarization of the different women's groups with the legal points at issue, so that discussions would lead to the formulation of draft laws;

(3) Submission of draft laws to the National Congress.

49. On 26 March, four legislative bills that had been drafted by the campaign participants were in fact submitted, on the following topics:

Consensual unions; female workers in private homes; day-care nurseries; and women's physical, psychological and moral welfare.

ARTICLE 9

Nationality

50. Article 9 of the Convention states that women shall have equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. In particular, marriage to an alien shall not automatically affect the nationality of the wife.

51. Dominican legislation still contains discriminatory provisions as regards nationality in that, if a female Dominican citizen enters into marriage with an alien, that alien does not enjoy the same privileges as would a female alien marrying a Dominican man: the female alien can acquire Dominican nationality at the time of marriage if she declares her wish to do so, whereas a male alien contracting marriage with a Dominican woman and wishing to obtain Dominican nationality must do so by the normal procedure for acquiring Dominican citizenship or through naturalization.

52. In this regard, there have been no amendments to the provisions referred to in the initial report that were regarded as discriminatory against women - no new measures relating to the nationality of women and their children have been introduced into our laws on international relationships.

ARTICLE 15

The law

53. Under the terms of this article, women shall be accorded equality with men before the law and shall therefore have a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity in the administration of property and in proceedings before the courts. All

contracts and other private instruments with legal effect restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void. Women shall have the right to freedom of movement and be entitled to choose their residence and domicile.

54. In compliance with this mandate and as a means of improving the legal status of Dominican women, a number of amendments to the Civil Code (essentially to articles 223 and 756) have been proposed. These amendments have already been referred to and discussed in detail in the initial report. To date, the amendments submitted in the draft legislation laid before the National Congress have not been adopted, with the exception of the bill on the right of married women to freely choose their place of residence during divorce proceedings.

(2) SPECIAL MEASURES (ARTICLE 4)

55. The wording of the Labour Code is ambiguous. On the one hand, it upholds dismissal and termination of employment from a unilateral legal standpoint.

56. On the other hand, it includes paternalistic protection, but purely in a formal manner, and there are a number of legal situations that are not taken into account, such as that of female workers in private homes.

57. There is thus a degree of uncertainty in the operation of employment legislation in the Dominican Republic as it applies to women.

58. A number of special measures which have been adopted in the Dominican Republic to protect the rights of women in priority areas are set out in the following paragraphs.

59. Article 211 of the Labour Code provides for pregnant workers as follows:

60. A woman may not be dismissed from her job by reason of being pregnant.

61. During pregnancy a woman may not be required to perform work that calls for physical exertion incompatible with her condition.

PARAGRAPH I. Cases of dismissal of pregnant workers must first be referred to the Department of Labour (or to the local authority fulfilling its role) in order to establish whether the dismissal is the result of the woman's condition.

PARAGRAPH II. Any employer who dismisses a pregnant worker without observing the procedure laid down in Paragraph I hereof shall be required to pay to that worker the benefits due to her under current labour laws and also a sum equal to four months' wages.

62. Article 212. If as a result of pregnancy or confinement the work performed by a female employee is hazardous to her health and that fact is certified by a medical practitioner, her employer shall be required to provide her with alternative employment.

63. If no alternative employment is available, she shall be entitled to take leave but without any antenatal or postnatal pay.

64. Article 214. During lactation, a mother shall be entitled to three additional breaks per day at her place of work, each of at least 20 minutes' duration, in order to breast-feed her child.

65. These provisions do not, however, correspond with reality. Apart from anything else, places of employment do not possess the kind of facilities that would, for example, enable working mothers to breast-feed their children.

66. These stipulations are intended to apply solely to women employees in the public and private sectors and do not cover women who perform domestic work. Hence, the Labour Code is discriminatory even in the categorization of services.

67. During the period under review, no amendments have been made to the statutory provisions concerning female employment that are contained in the Dominican Labour Code.

(3) CULTURAL AND FAMILY QUESTIONS (ARTICLES 5 AND 16)

The structure of the Dominican family

68. Economic development trends have had a direct impact on the composition and size of Dominican families. This can be seen from projections made by the Institute of Population Studies and Development (IEPD), according to which 51 per cent of rural households are composed of nuclear families, while 47 per cent of households located in urban areas consist of extended families.

69. Also, the average number of children per family varies from 5.3 in rural areas to 4.5 in urban areas.

70. The extended family arrangement could well be a strategy employed by the families themselves in response to the worsening economic crisis and as a way of ensuring that children are cared for and domestic tasks performed as the women increasingly engage in productive labour outside the home.

Marriage patterns in the Dominican Republic

71. One of the most significant aspects of marriage patterns in the country is the existence of two forms of partnership: on the one hand lawful matrimony and on the other hand common-law marriages or cohabiting partnerships. There is a marked increase in consensual unions compared to lawful unions.

72. Dominican legal tradition admits two types of marriage ceremony: civil marriage and marriage based on canon law, which is deemed equivalent to civil marriage under the concordat between the Dominican State and the Catholic Church.

Women heads of household

73. According to the findings of the latest population census, by 1981 26.1 per cent of households in urban areas and 16.8 per cent of households in rural areas were headed by women. This means that 42.9 per cent [sic] of the families included in the census were under female headship.

74. Our statistics apply to the female-head-of-household category when a woman bears responsibility for the family with no male partner. The procedure is different in the case of men, since they are classified as heads of household only in their capacity as husbands.

75. Society has traditionally assigned women the responsibility for the care, upbringing and guidance of their children and the family. Although women are now becoming involved in the productive life of the country, the physical, social and other structures that would facilitate this process by alleviating their burden of family responsibilities do not exist.

(4) MEASURES TO COMBAT PROSTITUTION AND TRAFFIC IN WOMEN (ARTICLE 6)

76. In preparing this second periodic report, we have taken into account the questions that were raised during consideration of the initial report, questions which the Government undertook to elaborate upon in the second report. Some of those questions related to the laws that penalize the practice of prostitution. This topic is discussed below, in order to provide additional information for the experts who will be examining this second periodic report.

Measures to combat sexual violence

77. The Dominican Penal Code does not define sexual violence against women but it does define rape among the crimes classified as "offences against decency", as follows: "Normal unlawful sexual intercourse with a female person without her willing participation", and lays down the following penalties (article 332):

- Any male found guilty of the offence of rape of a female aged less than 11 years is subject to a penalty of between six and 10 years' hard labour;

- If the victim is aged 11 years or over, the sentence lies between three and five years' hard labour;

- Any male found guilty of rape of a female aged 18 years or over is liable to a term of imprisonment of between three and six years.

78. The Penal Code also stipulates that rape shall be deemed an aggravated offence if the guilty party is a relative of the victim or a person having authority over her, or a tutor or guardian, a priest or minister of religion, or a public official who commits the act at his place of employment. 1/

79. Articles 8 and 9 of the Code of Criminal Procedure lay down that the Department of Public Prosecution (public prosecutor or district attorney), the examining magistrate or the prosecuting attorneys in the courts of appeal

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1/ "Cuando la violencia sexual es un crimen" ["When sexual violence is a crime"]: Journal Igualdad, year 1, 4, 1986, p. 8, Women's Legal Services Centre, Santo Domingo.

shall, under the supervision of the State Attorney-General, be responsible for investigating crimes and offences involving violence against women, for gathering evidence and for handing over the perpetrators to the courts charged with punishing them. 1/

80. Also, article 331 of the Penal Code deals with indecent assault; article 333 defines the aggravating circumstances relating to the offences covered in articles 331 and 332; articles 334 and 335 are concerned with pimping and corruption of minors; articles 336 to 339 lay down all the provisions relating to adultery; and article 340 refers to bigamy.

81. All these articles appear in the fourth section of the Penal Code, which groups together all crimes classified as "Offences against decency".

82. Changes to the Penal Code are envisaged in the preliminary bill to amend the existing laws that discriminate against women.

Practice of prostitution

83. During the consideration of the initial report, questions were asked about the connection between the prostitution of young women and economic considerations.

84. We endorse the arguments put forward in the reply given by the Dominican government representative, namely that the worsening economic and social crisis which has beset the Dominican Republic in recent years has served to sustain the practice of prostitution among young women.

85. It is women who are feeling the effects of this deepening crisis with most intensity and are being forced to seek alternative survival strategies.

86. In the face of high unemployment, together with other factors - social, economic and cultural - that are detrimental to women, one can readily appreciate that they, particularly young women, are susceptible to the practice of prostitution, encouraged by the sectors that exploit this situation commercially.

87. Turning to another matter, the Department for the Advancement of Women is currently conducting research into cases of rape against women and girls, in order to gain an insight into the problem of sexual violence in the Dominican Republic and to be able to propose positive steps to combat this phenomenon.

Female migration

88. In recent years there has been a migratory flow of Dominican women to countries in Europe and other islands in the Caribbean. No official figures are available concerning the percentage of emigrants or the activities pursued

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1/ "Cuando te querelles no te dejes ofender" ["When you lodge a complaint, don't let yourself be wronged"]: Journal Igualdad, year 11, 7, 1987, p. 10.

by them, but, on the basis of empirical observation as well as unofficial information and press reports, we can deduce that a considerable number of Dominican women are emigrating for economic reasons, and presumably to engage in prostitution.

89. There is evidence that Dominican women, particularly in European countries, are suffering harassment and ill-treatment, and it is being suggested that they are involved in prostitution.

90. In recent years a whole series of articles have appeared in the national press and in women's groups' publications, reporting cases of traffic in persons. For example:

(1) In the 24 July 1990 issue of the national newspaper Ultima Hora, on page 4, under the headline "Dancing girls for Switzerland", the Women's Centre for Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa warned Dominican women "not to let themselves be prevailed upon by supposed Swiss businessmen who offer them work as dancers in European countries, since this means prostitution ... young women who are hired as dancers end up being enslaved by a prostitution network said to operate in that country."

(2) Also, the 27 September 1990 edition of the Dominican newspaper El Nacional contained a news item on page 35 entitled "Curaçao authorities send women back to Dominican Republic for failing to meet requirements" 1/ and stating: "The Curaçao authorities yesterday returned 14 Dominican women who did not fulfil the requirements for entry into the Caribbean island. This is the second group to be refused entry into Curaçao in the last few days."

91. On their return, some of the women said that the authorities of Curaçao were under the misconception that all Dominican women who went to the island did so to engage in prostitution.

(5) QUESTIONS RELATING TO PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS (ARTICLES 7 AND 8)

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

92. During the period under review, the Dominican Republic's political scene was marked by the run-up to the elections, with the result that all activities and meetings organized in connection with women's participation in politics were centred around this national event - one of great importance in Dominican political life. Against that background, the debate on women's involvement in politics is taking on increased significance.

93. The Department for the Advancement of Women and also women's movements and other institutions and organizations working with women are endeavouring to stimulate a more profound analysis and discussion of this issue.

1/ These requirements include the handing over of a specific sum in dollars (US$ 1,200) in order to enter the Caribbean island.

II. EVENTS, ACTIVITIES AND DEMANDS

Events

94. Various events have been held in the country on this topic. In view of their importance to and impact on Dominican society, they are described in detail below.

(1) A Seminar on Women's Participation in Politics: This event, which was held in 1987, was organized by the Department for the Advancement of Women under the sponsorship of the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It was attended by Congresswomen, non-governmental women's organizations and party representatives, among others.

(2) The Fifth Congress of Christian-Democrat Women of Latin America: This international event was hosted by the women of the Christian Social Reformist Party, its essential aims being to formulate a vision of women to the year 2000 and adopt positions of support for the democratic governments being established in Latin America.

(3) The holding of the Congress for the Constitution of the Federation of Women Social Democrats affiliated to the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD).

(4) The Seminar on Women's Participation in Elections: This high-level seminar, held in 1989, was organized by the Department for the Advancement of Women and UNICEF and was attended by leaders of the major parties and representatives of the various ideological and political trends in the country. This event, which took place during the run-up to the elections, established important guidelines regarding the role to be played by women in electoral contests.

Activities and demands

95. At this historic moment, as the Dominican Republic passes through a severe economic and social crisis, women are involving themselves in the search for survival alternatives and are devising new organizational structures and new forms of political activity that will respond to the needs of society.

96. Furthermore, women's demands for greater involvement in political decision-making are being voiced alongside their demand for increased access to elective posts, both within their own parties and in society as a whole.

97. To publicize the action taken and demands made by Dominican women during this period, the Research Centre for Women's Action (CIPAF), which is a non-governmental organization, launched a campaign entitled "Igualdad, algo más que palabras" ["Equality, something more than words"]. The objectives of the campaign were:

(1) To show the importance of women's suffrage as a lobbying force which can bring about changes in the status of women;

(2) To assist in drawing up a political platform of minimum demands in order to ensure that women's issues are included in the programmes of all the parties;

(3) To promote - through the use of the mass media and other dissemination techniques - the active participation of women at election time;

(4) To encourage voluntary activities by women in response to the election platforms of the parties. 1/ As part of the campaign, a document incorporating the demands was produced (annex 1).

III. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE POLITICAL PARTIES, GOVERNMENT, CONGRESS AND ELSEWHERE

98. The democratic system by which the Dominican Republic is governed allows the people freedom of association, and thus we have a range of political parties with differing ideologies and individual organizational structures.

99. Within this range of political parties, there are three that are designated major parties on the basis of the size of their active membership, their integration into Dominican society and the number of votes won at the last national elections.

100. We set out below details of women's representation in these three parties, since we believe this will illustrate the extent of their political participation.

In the parties

(a) Christian Social Reformist Party (PRSC):

The organizational structure of this party incorporates a women's branch. The 100 members of the National Policy Committee include 19 women, but there is only one female member serving on the Executive Committee (the party's supreme body).

101. For the 1990 elections, groups of women party members were formed for the purpose of supporting their national candidates. The PRSC nominated Dr. Joaquín Balaguer for the Presidency of the Republic. These women's support groups were known as "Reformist women in action", "Women with Balaguer" and "Women, the future and Balaguer".

(b) Dominican Liberation Party (PLD):

102. The nine members who make up this party's Policy Committee include two women, representing 22.2 per cent.

103. Active female party membership is 30 per cent. Women constitute 75 per cent of the grass-roots leadership.

1/ Periodical Quehaceres, page 2, year 10, CIPAF, Santo Domingo.

104. The PLD has no women's branch, since that is seen as discriminatory against women, the party membership being regarded as a homogeneous group with common aims.

(c) Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD):

This party's organizational structure incorporates a women's branch. Active female membership at the national level is 41.47 per cent. There is one woman serving on the National Executive Committee, the top governing body, and the Municipal Committee for the National District has a female vice-president. Under the terms of an internal resolution, "... women should make up 20 per cent of all the executive organs of the party". 1/ This party also has to comply with a mandate of the Socialist International (of which it is an affiliate), which stipulates that 25 per cent of all elective posts must be held by women.

In the Government

105. Women have participated in the Government to a significant extent, having held a number of high-ranking posts, as can be seen from annex 2, which shows the most important positions occupied by women during the years 1988 and 1989.

106. In the civil service, women hold 14 important posts in various government offices. Also, five posts of importance have been assigned to women in the Judiciary, including the Department of Public Prosecution, the highest authority within the Dominican judicial system.

107. As regards the diplomatic service and foreign affairs in general, 23 women hold eminent positions; in the field of finance and banking, two women have been appointed to supervisory posts; and in the area of State social welfare, four women occupy important executive positions.

108. Furthermore, a woman has been elected to the Committee for the Fifth Centenary Commemorative Celebrations; women also hold managerial positions in the health sector, the micro-enterprise sector, the provincial government administration and in the field of commerce.

109. The posts of assistant to the President and special aid to the President are discharged by women. The Ministry of Finance is currently headed by a woman (see annex 2).

In Congress

110. Women's underrepresentation in Congress has prevented them from having a major influence on decision-making concerning measures and laws for their

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1/ Nivar de Fernández, Nora. Participación de la mujer en el Bloque Institucional Socialdemócrata (BIS-PRD) [Women's representation in the Social-Democrat Institutional Bloc (BIS-PRD)], Seminar on the Participation of Women in Elections, page 10.

benefit. It should also be pointed out that, when a woman enters Congress, she does so as the representative of a party, and the party has to channel its proposed legislation and measures through its congressional bloc.

111. At the 1986 elections, women made up 48 per cent of the voting public. In the newly formed Congress, only 10 of the 120 Deputies were women, and the 30 Senators included only one woman; also, women won only 40 elective posts - less than in 1974 and 1978, when they gained 63 and 70 posts respectively.

112. The participation of the Dominican women legislators in the Second Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Women Legislators, organized as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting held in Bulgaria, contributed to the establishment of guidelines concerning their role as female legislators.

113. It must be emphasized, however, that the manifest aim of the women members of Congress is to form a nucleus as such within Congress, in order to uphold and pursue their interests as women. This objective is handicapped by one genuine weakness: their numerical inferiority in Congress.

114. We wish to point out that Dominican Congresswomen have distinguished themselves by their regular attendance at meetings and by their diligence in discharging their assigned tasks. Within Congress, women have served on special committees and been employed in the Executive Office of the Chamber of Deputies. However, in these middle-management posts the women have in all cases served as members or secretaries, and in one exceptional instance as a vice-president.

IV. PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

115. We propose to outline below the main events and developments involving women that have taken place on the Dominican electoral scene.

(1) Ms. Rafaela Ledesma Pérez became the first female Dominican candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, at the 1990 elections. She was nominated by one of the minor parties, the Social-Democrat Party (PSD). As a woman candidate, she had the support of the political group "Women Decision 90".

(2) In the 1990 elections, women constituted 54 per cent of the voting public. At over one half, their vote is crucial.

116. Although strictly speaking this report covers only the years 1988-1989, it was in fact drawn up after the 1990 elections had been held. We can therefore indicate the outcome as far as women's representation is concerned, which we believe will be of interest.

Results of the elections for 1990-1994:

- Reduction in the number of women Senators from 1 to 0;

- Increase in the number of women Deputies from 10 to 12 (8 representing the PRSC and 6 the PLD).

(3) The Independent Women's Movement (MOFEI) took part in the 1990 elections, at which it applied for and obtained recognition by the Central Electoral Council, the body responsible for organizing general elections.

(4) The Independent Movement for Unity in the Capital (MIUCA) was formed, gained recognition and fielded a woman candidate for a post as Deputy.

(5) It has been found that the minor parties in the Dominican Republic are putting forward a larger number of female candidates than the major parties for elective posts and that the major parties are nominating women for posts which they know they will not win, which obviously constitutes an obstacle to the election of a greater number of women.

(6) EDUCATIONAL MATTERS (ARTICLE 10)

117. The country's Constitution establishes the right of the entire population to education without distinction as to sex, race, religion or social status. The system of State education accordingly offers cost-free schooling at the primary and secondary levels and at adult evening classes.

118. On the other hand, a process of privatization of education is taking place, predominantly at the higher (university) level, which has meant that educational opportunities for both males and females are becoming influenced by socio-economic factors. Furthermore, the persistence of sexist stereotyping and attitudes in the Dominican educational system and of traditional cultural patterns and beliefs among the population is reflected in sexually segregated teaching. In the case of vocational and technical education, segregation actually occurs within the subsystem of education, with male students being steered towards technical courses and female students towards the service sector. We thus find that the four main centres for technological training, which offer theoretical and practical instruction in mechanical engineering, woodworking, electrical engineering, radio, television and the graphic arts, are exclusively for male students.

119. The women's polytechnical colleges, on the other hand, are still providing instruction in cooking, handicrafts, garment cutting-out and making-up, floristry, machine-sewing, confectionery and ceramics. 1/

120. As regards educational coverage, statistical information is both unreliable and out of date. Despite these shortcomings, some studies reveal a process of steadily increasing female enrolment at the secondary and higher levels of education in the Dominican Republic since the 1960s.

1/ Taken from the document entitled Presencia del componente mujer en los planes y proyectos de la Secretaría de Educación, Bellas Artes y Cultos [Presence of the female component in the programmes and projects of the Department of Education, Fine Arts and Religious Affairs] (SEEBAC, mimeographed publication, 1989).

This process is closely linked to internal migratory movements, as as a result of which the index of female enrolment had already exceeded 100 by the 1980s. This phenomenon is in evidence in rural as well as in urban areas and in both State and private education.

121. There were 137 female pupils to every 100 male pupils in the country's private secondary schools in 1984-1985, 126 girls to every 100 boys in traditional State secondary education in 1985-1986, and 112 women students to every 100 male students enrolled in universities in 1987. 1/

122. There are differences in the patterns of primary enrolment between the State and private sectors. The trend in recent years has been towards a percentage reduction in State school enrolment and a steady increase in private school enrolment, chiefly in the capital city, where most private establishments are situated.

123. Enrolment in State primary schools reveals almost equal numbers of boys and girls. In 1985-1986, girl pupils accounted for 51.0 per cent of the total. Primary school attendance in both the State and the private sectors was 90.8 per cent in 1986-1987. One important characteristic of school attendance at the primary level is that enrolment falls as the grade of schooling rises. Thus, out of the total number of pupils enrolled at this level in 1985-1986 (926,317), 30.6 per cent corresponded to the first grade, 17.9 per cent to the second grade, 15.8 per cent to the third grade, 14.1 per cent to the fourth grade, 11.8 per cent to the fifth grade and just 9.8 per cent to the sixth grade.

124. A gender-based analysis shows that female students remain longer at school than male students, since, while more boys than girls have entered school, the proportion of girls has been slightly higher in the last three grades of primary education. Of all children enrolling in the State primary system in 1984-1985, the ratios in the reception class were 31.7 per cent boys and 29.4 per cent girls, while the female proportion in the sixth grade was slightly higher: 9.2 per cent boys, compared to 10.2 per cent girls.

125. Despite these figures, which display a lower drop-out rate among female students, gender-disaggregated figures are needed in order to ascertain the impact on girls of two other major problems within the Dominican education system, namely repetition and mixed-age classes.

126. Major reforms are required to deal with the serious problems affecting the education system as a whole: improvements in the curriculum and in the quality of teaching, a reduction in the (now large) proportion of children of school age who do not attend school, and so on.

127. With regard to extended education programmes and specifically adult education, the opportunities available do not appear to be equal for men and women or in urban and rural areas. The 68,868 people who enrolled in adult education programmes in 1987-1988 comprised 40,683 men and 28,185 women.

1/ Department of Education, Fine Arts and Religious Affairs. Diagnostic Survey of the Formal Education Sector, Santo Domingo, 1985, page 137.

The total enrolment in urban areas was 58,624 (33,376 men and 24,648 women) and in rural areas 10,244 (6,707 men and 3,537 women). These figures are very small in relation to the illiterate population of over one million people.

128. In 1987-1988, the number of students enrolling in the 67 State manual training schools of the Dominican Republic was 9,131, of whom 9,650 [sic] were females, who received instruction in traditional manual skills, as discussed previously.

(7) QUESTIONS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT POLICY (ARTICLE 11)

Female population

129. According to the latest Nationwide Population and Housing Census, the Dominican population in 1981 stood at 5,647,977 inhabitants, of whom 49.8 per cent were female and 50.1 per cent were male. Compared with the previous census data (1970), this represents an annual population increase of 2.1 per cent.

130. Estimates made for 1989 by the National Office of Planning (ONAPLAN), the Institute of Population Studies and Development (IEPD) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) put the population of the Dominican Republic at 7,019,107 and the number of female inhabitants at 3,452,065, equivalent to 49 per cent of the total population (see table 1).

131. Approximately one fifth of the female population is made up of women between 15 and 24 years old, and 58.4 per cent of the female population is aged between 15 and 64 years.

Participation in economic activity

132. On the basis of projections made by the National Office of Planning, the female proportion of the economically active population (EAP) of the country as a whole was estimated for 1988 at 48 per cent, i.e., approximately 945,700 women (see table 2).

133. Also, according to census data, the overall labour-force participation rate for 1970 was 49.4 per cent, the male rate being 66.6 per cent and the female rate 27 per cent. By 1988, the overall rate had risen to 58 per cent, the activity for women having increased to 41 per cent.

134. As the participation of women in productive activities has increased, female unemployment has exceeded male unemployment, particularly in rural areas, where in 1980 the rate stood at 53 per cent for women compared to 14 per cent for men. Also, female unemployment is higher in rural than in urban areas, the 1980 urban rate having been only 24.5 per cent (see table 3). The National Office of Planning estimates that, in 1988, 29 per cent of the economically active female population was unemployed. 1/

1/ Paper presented by the National Office of Planning at the Seminar on Policy Formulation, 1989.

135. This increase in women's participation in the labour market is occurring in parallel with an increase in female heads of households or female members of families with no adult males.

136. The theory being put forward is that women's increasing participation in the labour market is to a large extent a response to an urgent need to generate income in order to cope with the serious economic crisis besetting the Dominican Republic.

137. Furthermore, this influx of women into the labour force is taking place within a continuing family context of gender subordination. This means that women, even when taking up work outside the home, still bear the main responsibility for domestic tasks.

Educational status

138. The rate of women's participation in the urban labour market increases significantly with their level of educational attainment.

139. In the case of public-sector employees, the level is higher among women than among men, according to the National Office of Personnel Administration (ONAP). 1/

140. Nevertheless, within the technical and vocational education system, female student ratios are low, as women tend to train in traditional subjects or skills. This is apparent from the courses offered by the Institute of Technical and Vocational Training (INFOTEP), where the 53,823 students who graduated between 1985 and 1989 included 15,525 women (see table 4). The percentage of female workers attending such courses or training programmes is very low compared to that of male workers.

Occupations performed by women

141. A close correlation can be seen between women's educational level and their employment in the various job categories.

142. According to statistical data, the total EAP in the professional, technical and related workers category in 1980 amounted to 70,500 people, of whom 49.5 per cent were women. However, the ratio of women employed in this occupational group to the total female EAP is 7.4 per cent.

143. As regards decision-making posts, women continue to occupy positions in middle management. This is evidenced by employee statistics for the civil service, where, in 1984, 73 per cent of the posts from section head to minister level were held by men. This discrimination in employment is not related to levels of formal education, which are higher among female than among male civil servants.

1/ ONAP Sectoral Diagnostic Survey presented at the Seminar on Policy Formulation, 1989.

144. An examination of the breakdown of the female EAP by branch or sector of activity shows that the ratio of women is increasing in all sectors, the tertiary sector absorbing most of the female labour force. On the other hand, if the labour market is split into its formal and informal sectors, domestic service is seen to be the main source of recruitment for urban female labour, with 30 per cent of the female EAP in Santo Domingo and 26 per cent of the total female EAP. The modern sector absorbs 29.2 per cent and the informal sector 22.1 per cent (see table 5).

145. With regard to the modern sector, special mention should be made of the export processing zones, since they constitute one of the areas with the highest demand for female labour.

146. It is estimated that, in 1983, workers in the export processing zones accounted for more than 13 per cent of the formal-sector workforce recorded by the National Office of Statistics (ONE). This trend has continued, the number of jobs created reaching 122,946 in 1989 (see table 6).

147. In this industrial growth area, well over half the labour force is female, the figure being put at around 70 per cent according to estimates made by the Industrial Development Corporation.

148. In absolute terms, that represents a total of 86,062 women employed in this sector in 1989. There is a link between the high rate of women's economic participation in this sector and the large number of firms engaged in garment manufacture there.

149. Furthermore, average wages paid in 1989 were US$ 0.55 per hour, the lowest in the whole of Central America and the Caribbean.

150. It must be acknowledged that, although the export processing zones have become the main provider of employment for women in the Dominican Republic, working conditions are far from attractive. Female labour is more abundant because it is viewed as cheaper and more skilled. Concentration, nimbleness and stamina are needed: 90 per cent of women operatives work more than eight hours a day and in some factories are not paid overtime; in many instances they are allotted output quotas, which are a cause of illness and stress: in fact, more than 50 per cent of the factories in the Dominican Republic operate a quota system. 52 per cent of those employed perform their work seated all the time, while 27 per cent work standing up. 30 per cent of these female workers come from the countryside, 46 per cent from the towns, and 76 per cent do not originate from the towns where the export processing zones in which they work are located. 1/

1/ Source: "Cuando trabajar es un infierno: las mujeres y las zonas francas en la República Dominicana" ["When working is hell: women and the export processing zones in the Dominican Republic"]. Ediciones Populares Feministas, Vol. 2, CIPAF.

Income levels

151. It is significant that there is a higher proportion of women than men in the lower income brackets. According to the Manpower Survey for the City of Santo Domingo, in 1983 the informal sector and domestic sector together accounted for 52.9 per cent of all women employed in the capital at that time (see table 7), and 50.7 per cent of those women earned wages of between 50.00 and 200.00 pesos per month (see table 8).

152. From a correlative analysis of variables, it can be seen that there are differences between the earnings of women and men even when the educational attainments of the men are poor.

153. There are a variety of factors to account for this unequal income situation. Men and women do not work predominantly in the same sectors, nor do they perform the same occupations, and men tend to hold more senior positions.

Measures to improve women's working conditions

154. Mention should be made of the endeavours of a group of non-governmental women's organizations to introduce into the Legislative Chambers two bills that would have a favourable impact on the employment conditions of women.

155. These are a bill to regulate the conditions of female workers in private homes and a bill to establish day-care facilities in urban and rural areas, and also at business and factory premises, primarily in the export processing zones.

(8) QUESTIONS RELATING TO HEALTH (ARTICLE 12)

ARTICLE 12

156. There are major difficulties in assessing the extent of discrimination against women in the area of medical and health care in the Dominican Republic, for various reasons.

157. Health statistics are both unreliable and deficient. Vital statistics (births and deaths) suffer from a high degree of under-registration, the under-registration of deaths being estimated at 40 per cent. In addition, the data are of poor quality, since in remote localities death certificates are filled out by non-medical personnel.

158. The epidemiological statistics processed at the Department of Public Health relate to notifiable, contagious diseases. However, these data are deficient in that they are not recorded by sex. Hospital morbidity statistics, even if gathered by sex and age, are not processed in a gender-disaggregated manner, since the system is not equipped for that purpose.

159. There is no single health system in the country, the services being offered through a complex, non-uniform and fragmentary structure, resulting in unequal access of the population to medical and health-care facilities. Consequently, socio-economic factors such as employment, distribution of income, educational status, level of nutrition and housing conditions are major determinants of health, particularly that of women.

160. The lack of basic services (including water, electricity, transportation and basic sanitation), which has become acute in recent years, is severely impairing the population's quality of life, and woman are worse affected than men owing to their dual role as wage-earners and housewives.

161. Over the last decade, public health standards in general have deteriorated. Rates of infection by the 10 main communicable diseases were significantly higher in 1986 than in 1981. 1/ There has also been a marked increase in the incidence of water-borne diseases, tuberculosis, malaria and venereal diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhoea. The actual maternal mortality rate is not known, although official statistics put it at eight deaths for every 10,000 live births, in 91.5 per cent of cases death being directly due to obstetrical causes, such as toxaemia and infections. Even though infant mortality among girls is somewhat lower than among boys (51.4 compared to 81.3 per thousand live births for the years 1981-1986), the overall infant mortality rate is very high (68 per thousand for the same period).

162. Over the last three years, the health sector has been adversely affected by the decrease in the public spending allocation, which fell from 8.1 per cent in 1987 to 7.5 per cent in 1989.

163. As regards family planning services, in 1986, 11 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 years failed to meet their birth control needs. Of that proportion, 5.8 per cent were hoping to space the births and 5.2 per cent to limit the number of their offspring. In absolute terms, these percentages were equivalent to 180,000 potential users of contraceptives, of whom 91,000 sought to space the births of their children and 89,000 wished to have no more children at all. In rural areas, the ratio of potential users is almost twice that in urban areas: 15.4 per cent as against 8.6 per cent. 2/

(9) ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS (ARTICLE 13)

Effects of the economic crisis

164. The economic crisis in the Dominican Republic, which has been worsening since the 1980s, has now reached alarming proportions. The gross domestic product (GDP) for 1988 was 3,505.9 million pesos, the manufacturing sector being the largest contributor at around 588.2 million pesos. It is estimated that, for 1989, the GDP reached 3,640.7 million pesos, giving a growth rate of 3.8 per cent in relation to the previous year.

1/ World Bank Diagnostic Survey on the Public Health of the Country, periodical El Siglo, September 1990.

2/ República Dominicana: demanda y oferta de planificación familiar [Dominican Republic: supply and demand in family planning], IEPD, Santo Domingo, 1989.

165. It can be seen that agriculture, a key sector in our economy, grew by only 0.7 per cent from 1988 to 1989, while electricity sustained negative growth of 8.3 per cent (see table 9).

166. Furthermore, the average monthly minimum wage was 425 pesos in 1988 and 532.5 pesos in 1989. The rate of inflation for those two years was 44.5 and 45.4 per cent respectively, while the estimated cost of the family shopping basket was around 1,073 pesos for 1988 and 1,383 pesos for 1989. The purchasing power of the minimum wage was 39.6 per cent in 1988 and 38.5 per cent in 1989, i.e. a fall of 2.8 per cent (see table 10).

167. It is estimated that public welfare spending was 351.5 million pesos in 1988 and 333.2 million pesos in 1989, which represents a decrease of 5.2 per cent. An examination of a number of variables in basic social services shows that health spending fell by 11 per cent and that there was an alarming 27 per cent decrease in expenditure on municipal services (see table 11).

168. An analysis of these macroeconomic and social variables reveals the extent to which women are being affected by the worsening recession since, in addition to undertaking paid work in order to contribute to the family income, they devote many hours to domestic duties, which are made more onerous by the deterioration in social services.

Opportunities for individual economic development

169. Although the regulations of the financial and banking system do not explicitly lay down any gender-based distinctions in the granting of loans, women's access to credit is still severely limited.

170. This is primarily due to the restriction whereby a woman has to arrange for a male proxy to stand surety in order that she may qualify for a loan.

171. Her financial dependence is further increased by the fact that it is the head of the family (understood as the male in our patriarchal society) who is granted title to the land in the farming settlements; men are thus more creditworthy and possess security against which to borrow.

172. It should also be pointed out that, although most financial institutions questioned expressed a preference for dealing with women, since they could be relied upon to meet their commitments, there is no specific policy in existence that would offer greater opportunities for women's individual economic development.

173. Mention should be made of the existence of the Dominican Association for Women's Development (Women's Bank), an affiliate of the Women's World Bank, whose main objective is to achieve the full integration of women and their families into the formal economic and credit system, by strengthening and developing female entrepreneurship.

174. As of June 1990, that organization had granted loans worth 8,690,392.05 pesos to a total of 7,206 women.

Access to leisure activities

175. The provisions of Dominican legislation do not discriminate between men and women in regard to sports, recreational and cultural opportunities. Nevertheless, women's circumstances place them in a vicious circle. Since they have to devote many hours to household tasks and child care, independently of any paid work that they may undertake, they have little energy and time available for leisure activities.

(10) QUESTIONS RELATING TO RURAL WOMEN (ARTICLE 14)

General background: The agrarian situation

176. The crisis in agriculture worsened during the 1980s. This crisis has manifested itself in a variety of ways:

(a) A reduction in the agricultural and livestock sector's relative share of GDP, and an expansion of the informal urban tertiary sector;

(b) A decrease in food production and an increase in imported foods and raw materials;

(c) Diminished production of some traditional export crops (cocoa, sugar-cane);

(d) A fall in the rural population growth rate and an increasing population shift to urban areas;

(e) Erosion of the material basis for small-scale production and increasing disintegration of farming communities, resulting in more landless peasant farmers, a rise in unemployment and under-employment in agriculture, and increased migration.

177. A combination of factors contributed to this agrarian crisis:

(a) The limited and non-diversified integration of the Dominican economy into the world market, which has a direct impact on the agro-export sector and restricts the scope of the Government's rural farming strategies;

(b) A worsening of the terms of the relationship between agriculture and industry, to the detriment of the former;

(c) Fragmentation of farming units.

Rural women

178. Rural women have been classified in the following categories:

- Women performing unpaid work;

- Women undertaking remunerated activities outside the home;

- Women wage-earners;

- Women engaging in market subsystem economic activities;

- Women heads of household or cohabitees with male heads of household (see annex 3).

179. According to the Survey on the Work of Rural Women, conducted in 1988 by the Research Centre for Women's Action (CIPAF), 84 per cent of females aged 10 years and over contribute to the family unit's production activities.

180. Also, 52 per cent of rural women fall into the unpaid category, while 29 per cent are self-employed and only 18 per cent receive a wage.

181. The survey further indicates that 60 per cent of rural women live with a male partner to whom they are not legally married, which gives rise to serious problems owing to the discriminatory provisions of our Agrarian Code.

182. The Agrarian Code comprises some 46 statutory instruments (laws, decrees, ministerial orders and amendments). Within that set of legal provisions, women are alluded to once only, in article 43, chapter VI, and the term used in that article to refer to women is "wife".

183. It should be pointed out that there are no official statistics which would permit a thorough study of the situation of rural women in relation to questions such as land tenure, credit facilities and legal status. The absence of such statistics reflects a lack of awareness regarding the situation of women in general.

Participation of rural women in development programmes

184. The participation of rural women in the Government's development programmes is described extensively in annex 4, since it is regarded as an important issue. We will therefore refer here to their participation in non-governmental schemes.

185. In the 1980s a reorientation of the approach to the mobilization of rural women at the community level began to take place through the progressive democratization of grass-roots organizations. This redefinition was assisted by the non-governmental institutions working in the sector, through a clearer recognition and identification of the problems of rural women.

186. The programmes carried out by these institutions thus entail two distinct facets:

(a) Production and income generation;

(b) Training and education (vocational and public).

187. To these should be added the research work being undertaken by most of the non-governmental organizations into the status of women, which will serve as a tool for deciding upon future courses of action.

188. Noteworthy among the efforts of these institutions is the work of Women in Development Inc. (MUDE), a non-governmental organization that finances

agricultural and livestock programmes, of which there are currently some 3,400 beneficiaries. All its loans are granted to women, the share of the rural farming associations in the overall amount borrowed being around 31 per cent.

189. These programmes are sponsored by international organizations that have joined forces with the Dominican Government to improve the status of rural women.

190. There is also the Sierra Plan. This plan is being implemented in the Sierra de San José de las Matas, with the sponsorship of international organizations and the direct involvement of the Catholic Church.

191. The plan entails the setting up of family schemes based on ecologically sound criteria, whereby families are provided with food in exchange for work performed. This ensures that they can devote their time to establishing the ecological infrastructure needed for sustained production. In 1989, the programme operated with 500 families and, for 1990, there were plans to work with 3,500 families in the poorest areas.

192. This programme encompasses various activities, including vegetable growing, fish-pond farming and livestock breeding. It is structured so as to enable all family members to be involved, especially the women.

Social services and medical care

193. Rural women are included in the various social services programmes - including health - that are operated by the State through the competent agencies.

194. Also, non-governmental organizations working in rural areas incorporate elements of social welfare within in their own projects as a means of providing support to the Government in matters relating to the situation of rural women. The problems dealt with include:

- Environmental improvements;
- Basic community services;
- Health workers;
- Gynaecological and general medical care;
- Oral hygiene; and
- Latrine construction.

Education, training and technical assistance

195. Rural programmes exist that are aimed specifically at literacy training. Generally speaking, the schemes and programmes being implemented in rural areas include training for women according to their needs. Rural women are also provided with technical assistance in the various activities that they perform.

196. These programmes are formulated in such a way as to involve all the family members in cultural and recreational activities, which include the formation of choirs and theatre groups.

Mobilization of the rural sector

197. In the Dominican Republic there is no adequate legal framework for the establishment of enterprise associations in accordance with uniform criteria, despite the large number of women's and youth associations in existence. With the exception of the cooperative enterprise model and the now-discontinued rural farming enterprise model of the agrarian reform period, such associations are based on Law No. 520 of the 1920s, which defines associations as civic groups with no constitutional or legal backing.

198. This lack of adequate legal definition has particularly serious effects on the rural farming sector, where virtually no women's organization is a legally established corporation or possesses constitutionally guaranteed rights.

199. In the face of this ill-defined situation regarding enterprise associations, new models of comprehensive rural participation and development are being devised in which male/female roles are interpreted not only in terms of the production process but also in relation to the process of social and political change. It is on these lines that the Rural Women's Programme (PROMUCA) has been set up at the Ministry of Agriculture.

200. Under this association-based programme, an enterprise model has been created with very specific aims and aspirations:

- Efficient national utilization of production factors with a view to achieving the maximum possible benefit in terms of income;

- Contribution to production in accordance with the country's national and regional planning policy;

- Contribution to community development and job creation;

- Enhanced participation by enterprise members in economic, social and political decision-making.

201. The establishment of enterprises of this kind is based on the developmental concept of an economically viable, self-managed business.

202. According to data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, in 1982 there were 455 rural women's associations, with a total membership of 14,702 women, equivalent to 15.3 per cent of the rural population.

203. The development of this enterprise model is currently at a standstill owing to the present economic climate.

Access to agricultural loans

204. The Agricultural Bank of the Dominican Republic is a decentralized institution whose main function is to extend credit facilities to the agricultural sector and to boost national output.

205. Under the bank's statutory regulations, no distinctions are made between men and women in the granting of credit. Nevertheless, men are the major recipients of loans.

206. Although this institution considers that money loaned to women is easier to recover, it operates no clearly-defined policy that would offer greater opportunities for women's access to credit.

207. There are no gender-disaggregated statistics, but the Bank indicates that the programmes for which it usually grants loans to women relate to poultry-breeding, wine-growing and short-season crop cultivation. The group of women recipients of loans for rice-growing projects accounts for between 1 and 2 per cent.